

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of making a sealing gasket of a variety which includes a generally annular retainer member having an inner and outer diametric extent which define a perimeter of a closed geometric shape, and at least one compressible seal member formed of an elastomeric material which is supported on the retainer member,
5 said method comprising the steps of:

(a) providing at least a first and a second retainer segment, each said retainer segment extending intermediate a first end and a second end, and having an inner periphery and an outer periphery;

(b) connecting the first end of each said retainer segment of step (a) to the
10 second end of an adjacent said retainer segment to form said retainer member, the inner periphery of each said segment defining a portion of the inner diametric extent of said retainer member, and the outer periphery of each said segment defining a portion of the outer diametric extent of said retainer member; and

(c) attaching said seal member to said retainer member of step (b) as a
15 continuous ring of said elastomeric material which extends along the perimeter of said retainer member.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein:

each said retainer segment is provided in step (a) as having an inner surface which defines the inner periphery thereof, and an outer surface which defines the outer periphery thereof;

5 said retainer member is formed in step (b) as having an inner axial surface which defines the inner diametric extent of said retainer member, and an outer axial surface which defines the outer diametric extent of said retainer member, the inner surface of each of the retainer segments of step (a) defining a portion of the inner axial surface of

said retainer member, and the outer surface of each of the retainer segments of step (a)
10 defining a portion of the outer axial surface of said retainer member; and

said seal member is attached to said retainer member in step (c) by being molded
in place on the inner surface of each said retainer segment to extend continuously about
the inner axial surface of said retainer member.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein:

each said retainer segment is provided in step (a) as having an inner surface which
defines the inner periphery thereof, and an outer surface which defines the outer periphery
thereof;

5 said retainer member is formed in step (b) as having an inner axial surface which
defines the inner diametric extent of said retainer member, and an outer axial surface
which defines the outer diametric extent of said retainer member, the inner surface of
each of the retainer segments of step (a) defining a portion of the inner axial surface of
said retainer member, and the outer surface of each of the retainer segments of step (a)
10 defining a portion of the outer axial surface of said retainer member; and

said seal member is attached to said retainer member in step (c) by being molded
in place on the outer surface of each said retainer segment to extend continuously about
the outer axial surface of said retainer member.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein:

each said retainer segment is provided in step (a) as having an upper surface
extending intermediate the inner and the outer periphery thereof, and a lower surface
disposed opposite the upper surface and extending intermediate the inner and the outer
5 periphery of said retainer segment;

said retainer member is formed in step (b) as having an upper radial surface
which extends intermediate the inner and outer diametric extent of said retainer member,
and a lower radial surface disposed opposite of the upper radial surface and which
extends intermediate the inner and outer diametric extent of said retainer member, the
10 upper surface of each of the retainer segments of step (a) defining a portion of the upper

radial surface of said retainer member, and the lower surface of each of the retainer segments of step (a) defining a portion of the lower radial surface of said retainer member; and

15 said seal member is attached to said retainer member in step (c) by being molded in place on the upper surface of each said retainer segment to extend continuously about the upper radial surface of said retainer member.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein:

each said retainer segment is provided in step (a) as having an upper surface extending intermediate the inner and the outer periphery thereof, and a lower surface disposed opposite the upper surface and extending intermediate the inner and the outer
5 periphery of said retainer segment;

said retainer member is formed in step (b) as having an upper radial surface which extends intermediate the inner and outer diametric extent of said retainer member, and a lower radial surface disposed opposite of the upper radial surface and which extends intermediate the inner and outer diametric extent of said retainer member, the
10 upper surface of each of the retainer segments of step (a) defining a portion of the upper radial surface of said retainer member, and the lower surface of each of the retainer segments of step (a) defining a portion of the lower radial surface of said retainer member; and

said seal member is attached to said retainer member in step (c) by being molded
15 in place on the lower surface of each said retainer segment to extend continuously about the lower radial surface of said retainer member.

6 The gasket of claim 1 wherein said retainer member is formed of a metal material selected from the group consisting of aluminum, steel, stainless steel, copper, brass, titanium, nickel, and alloys thereof.

7. The gasket of claim 1 wherein said seal member is formed of a natural or synthetic rubber.

8. The gasket of claim 1 wherein:

the first end of each said retainer segment of step (a) is configured to be interlocked with the corresponding second end of said adjacent said retainer segment of step (b); and

5 the first end of each said retainer segment is interlocked in step (b) to the second end of said adjacent said retainer segment.

9. The gasket of claim 8 wherein:

the first end of each said retainer segment of step (a) is configured as a ball portion and the second end of each said retainer segment of step (a) is configured as a socket portion; and

5 the ball portion of each said retainer segment is received in step (b) in the socket portion of said adjacent said retainer segment.